

Island County Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas Update

May 14, 2014

Board of County Commissioners
Workshop



Outline

1. Project background
2. Technical Advisory Group (TAG)
3. Best Available Science and Existing Conditions Report
4. Audit/Issues by topic
5. Policy and regulation update



Project Background

- Goal:
 - To assess and improve management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
- Original intent of grant:
 - To utilize existing Watershed Characterization Model (Puget Sound)
- Modified due to County's unique character
- Overall goal has remained consistent



Project Background, cont.

- Technical Advisory Group (TAG) formed to provide technical oversight
 - To “act as a peer review committee and ensure that the update includes the best available science (BAS).” (TAG Statement of Purpose)



BAS and Existing Conditions Review

- Provides an overview of current science regarding County specific FWHCAs
- Review of BAS based on the watershed characterization framework
- Assessment of protection standards for freshwaters and upland terrestrial habitats
- Includes management recommendations



Key Considerations & Approaches

- Where does this apply
 - Distinguish between Shoreline Jurisdiction and Upland GMA jurisdiction
- Balancing of near term needs for GMHB response and long term picture of holistic ecosystem processes
 - Vegetation management, clearing, habitat corridors and incentives



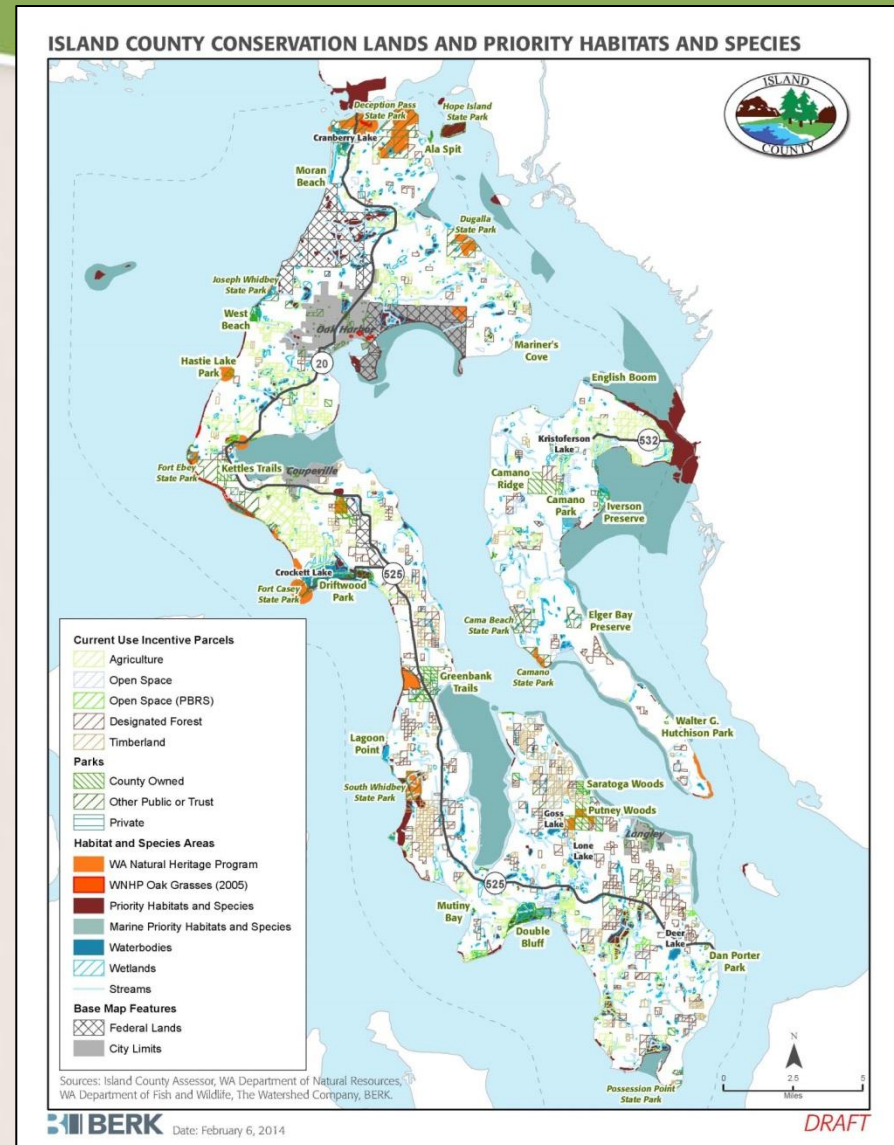
Audit / Issues by Topic

- Approaches to protection
- Policy / Code organization
- Exemptions, RUE, Variances
- Stream typing
- Riparian buffers
- Habitats and Species of Local Importance
- Agricultural Activities
- Fish and wildlife habitat corridors



Audit / Issues by Topic

- Approaches to protection (Sections 3.1 and 3.3)
 - Goals, policies, and regulations are the focus
 - Provide better code organization
 - Clarify basics such as applicability, permitting, mitigation sequencing, etc.
 - Structure with an eye towards full CAO integration
 - Regulatory incentives / flexibility
 - Consider incentives (e.g., current use taxation) with Comprehensive Plan Update



Audit / Issues by Topic

- Policy organization (Section 3.2)
 - Update Policy Plan/Land Use Element policies to address each type of FWHCAs
 - Cross reference the SMP for FWHCAs that only occur in shoreline jurisdiction (e.g. kelp and eelgrass beds).
 - Clarify jurisdiction of SMP and GMA FWHCAs
 - Recognize interrelated ecosystem concerns, e.g. interference with natural erosion of bluffs may be a concern, by adding BMPs in code
 - Near term step regarding habitat corridors, reference the Parks and Recreation Element Habitat Conservation Concept Map (see Section 3.9).



Audit / Issues by Topic

- Exemptions, RUE, Variances (Section 3.4)
 - Exemption process clarified and strengthened – criteria to ensure BMPs and deminimus impact as well as to determine if full review is needed
 - Exemption language clarified – what is normal repair? what is serviceable?
 - Allowance for activities that result in habitat / species protection – e.g. exemption for culvert replacement as part of road exemptions
 - Consolidated RUE & Variance Process



Audit / Issues by Topic

- Stream Typing (Section 3.5)
 - Use new DNR stream typing system
 - Type S (Shorelines)
 - Type F (Fish use)
 - Type Np (non-fish bearing, perennial)
 - Type Ns (non-fish bearing seasonal)



Audit / Issues by Topic

- Riparian Buffers (Section 3.6)
 - Base on BAS Report.
 - Provide a “standard” set of buffer widths that can be applied with minimal documentation from experts/consultants.
 - Provide an allowance for reduced buffers that could be applied if an applicant demonstrates a need and proposes restoration actions.
 - Buffer averaging should continue to be allowed where functions and downstream functions will not be degraded.
 - Retain the ability to require larger buffers if threats to functions can be identified.



Audit / Issues by Topic

- Habitats and Species of Local Importance (Section 3.7, Appendices)
 - Process should be updated – more clear criteria and requirements
 - Retain the Type IV legislative review process
 - For clarity, habitats and species of local importance that are regulated by other sections of the code (e.g. SMP or wetlands) could be removed, while others retained.
 - New nominations, address during Comp Plan Update



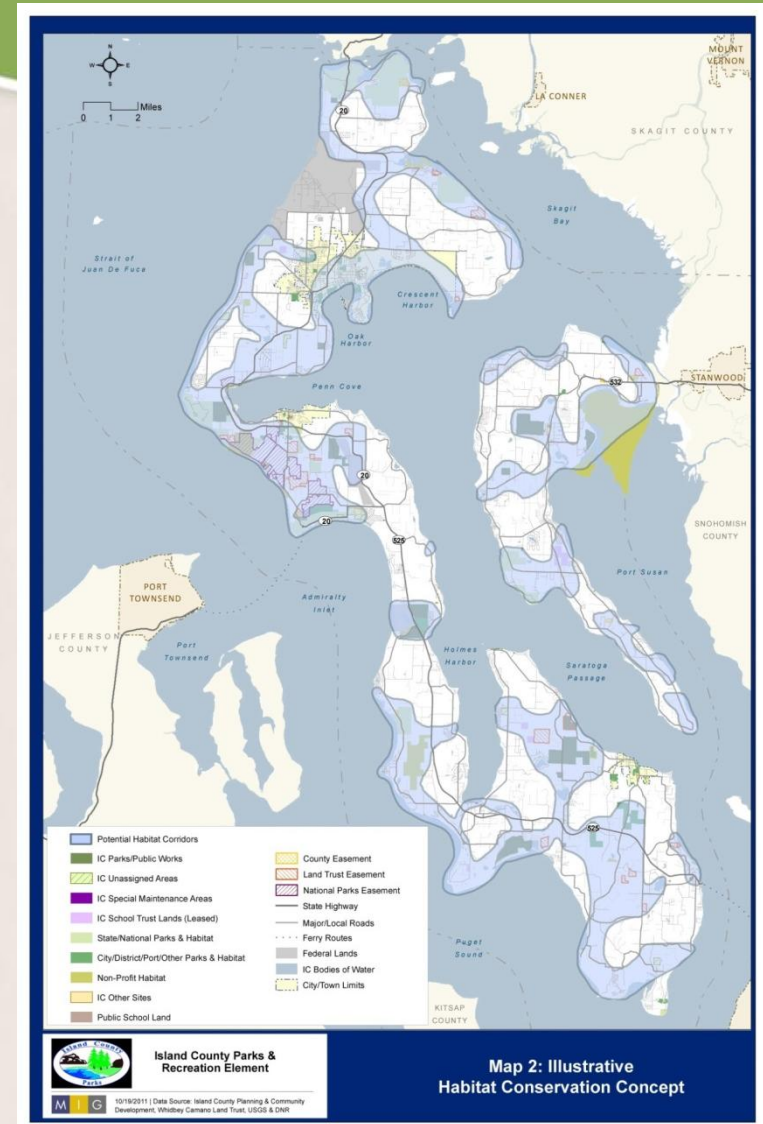
Audit / Issues by Topic

- Agricultural Activities (Section 3.8)
 - Clarify the maintenance of artificial watercourses
 - Led to the overall clarification of stream definitions
 - In the future, consider defining best management practices for artificial watercourse maintenance, e.g. at time of Comp Plan Update 2016



Audit / Issues by Topic

- Fish and wildlife habitat corridors (Section 3.9)
 - Consolidate and Reference Corridor Maps, relying on Parks and Recreation Element Habitat Conservation Concept Map
 - In future as part of Comp Plan Update, consider vetting and amending map and addressing voluntary incentives



Policy and Regulation Update

- Key Issues discussed with TAG
 - Mitigation sequencing
 - Definitions
 - Exemptions
 - Permitted alterations
 - Stream buffers
 - Buffer reduction mechanisms
 - Habitats and species of local importance
 - Nomination process
 - Other issues: prairies



Policy and Regulation Update

- Key issues/code changes discussed with PC
 - Stream Definition
 - Regulated vs non-regulated
 - Exemptions
 - Repair up to 50% of value instead of by area
 - Timeline for idle agricultural use
 - Prairies
 - Existing protections and mapped areas
 - Nomination process

